

Education Governance Responses
Newport Meeting (3/12/07) - North Country Union High School

29 Attendees (facilitated by Robin Scheu)

Question #1: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the present education governance system in your community?:

Advantages

Sense of community
Participation
Support
Local control
Local response
Local sensitivity
Community involvement
Empowerment
Stronger voice
Accessibility
Strong student involvement
Funding
Local control/context
Travel
Ownership at local level
Sense of community
SU tied together by roads
Greater support for town budgets
Local choice for board, administrators and teachers
More direct contact with school personnel – accountability
More direct parental involve
Students identify with town
Citizens/parents have greater chance to be heard

Disadvantages

Cost and cooperation
Lack to access of resources
Economy of scale
Lack of continuity
Distribution of board talent
Administrative costs
SU too large
Too many board members
Geographically too large
Smaller communities have less input
Coordination of curriculum
Boards may choose different programs/texts/curric./etc
Not much citizen participation in board activities – unless there is a “crisis”
Some on board have an “axe to grind” and greater power
Political coalitions give advantage to larger towns

Question #2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the school district model suggested by Commissioner Cate in his White Paper?

Advantages

Better for the Department of Education
Better for superintendent
Efficient
Concentration of board talents
Top down design
Teacher/staff mobility
Eliminates Act 60/68 issues
Less meetings for superintendent
Broader curriculum
Increased access to resources
Equality
More efficiency
Administrators spend less time at meetings and more time tending to responsibilities
Empower superintendents to deal with issues
Uniformity to support staff
Bulk buying (heating oil, supplies, food, transportation)

Disadvantages

Lack or reduced community ownership
Lack of community control of administration/staff
“The 1” Board would turn into full time position (committee work, knowledge of system)
Potential of imbalance of power
Combined with school choice would speed up consolidation based on perceived economy scale
No bottom up hierarchy
Passing budgets
Erodes town meeting tradition
Regional control trumps local control
Creates haves/have nots
Taxation issues
Only superintendent would hire principals
Harder for citizens to participate
Ownership of schools unclear
“Voice” is diluted
Geographically too large
Transportation costs
Cost uncontrollable
How would budgets be decided?
Loss of lack of community
Lack of support
Fear of school closing
Less personal contact
Fear of smaller schools not being heard
Too much power to majority – minority overlooked
The more parental/community involvement is removed, the students become anonymous
Remove power from local school boards regarding hiring/firing

Flexibility of support and staff lost
Loss of control over local town budgets

Debrief Comments:

Exploding mission of the school
Cost of mandates
Shrinking middle class
Lack of opportunities
From superintendent position current is chaotic
Would budgets pass? Would budgets pass more easily?
Loss of closeness impact quality neg? Impact quality pos? Impact quality at all?
SU model is not the answer
More centralized spec ed
Incentives for quality education at lower cost
State take over special ed.costs
Family to take greater responsibility
K.I.S.S.
Reduce to 30 school districts
Shift more special ed costs to state
Shift health care costs to state
More training for new board set up
Professional board members
Fine tune current model
(all brainstorm are valid)
Trouble understanding how changes to ed. Governance would affect ed.quality – what is the correlation?
Would new districts follow current su boundaries?
Evening opened up issues not only of governance but also taxation issues
Observation that resources (example: guidance) aren't distributed equitably; governance change might alleviate inequities
Students are our main concern – what does this do for children?
Needs of elementary/middle students are different than those of secondary students. Maybe need two boards (?)
State perspective – Vermont does really well with its per pupil (compared to other states)
Invitation to House Ed committee meeting re: bill that includes governance